

## Event Report

### LifeSciences@work Kick-off Event 2010

17 June 2010, Winkel van Sinkel, Utrecht

#### Mix and interact

LifeSciences@work kick-off event attracts enthusiastic crowd

**Do your homework before approaching a TTO. Raise money when it is available; don't wait until you need it. Bring in a third party when negotiations get stuck. Be willing to share. Subsidies are great, but dangerous as well. Starting a company is not the same as playing the entrepreneur at parties. And these are just some of the 'take home messages' we learned at the LifeSciences@work kick-off event on 17 June 2010 in Utrecht, where approximately 55 life sciences starters and 20 experts came together.**

**The programme featured three workshops, each focusing on dealing with counterparts that most life sciences starters will encounter: Technology Transfer Offices (TTO), investors and (potential) strategic partners. Contrary to what you may expect, dealing with a TTO can really stir up emotions, as was exemplified by the lively discussions during the workshop.**



#### Facilitator or negotiator?

Judging from the remarks of the audience, the role of the TTO as both a facilitator for academic valorisation and a representative for the university during negotiations can lead to frustration with aspiring entrepreneurs. Especially when workshop leader Carine van den Brink of Life Sciences Legal stated that you should approach a TTO like you would approach a Venture Capitalist, the audience reacted with disbelief. Simply expecting a TTO to help you out will put you ten-nil down right away, she said. Several participants stated that they expect a TTO to provide advice and support as well. According to Dirkjan Masman of the Business Generator Groningen, the key to success is creating commitment and comfort. If both parties are determined to make it work, it will work. But starting a company is not a game or a hobby, he warned. If you're only interesting in boasting about being entrepreneur at parties, you're better off in your current job. Bottom-line: Negotiations with a TTO are the starting point and are nothing compared to what you may encounter down the line when dealing with venture capitalists.



#### Interactive atmosphere

The open and engaging atmosphere during the first workshop set the scene for the whole event. During sessions and breaks, there was an ongoing flow of interaction and discussion. "It is good to see so many young people here", said Rita Wiekamp of Publimarket. "There is a lot of enthusiasm and potential among them." Stefan Braam, winner of the Venture Challenge 2009 with his venture Pluriomics, appreciated the programme.

"The workshops were very interactive and useful, because they focused real life topics that starting companies encounter." Ruud Santing, founder of PROXY Laboratories and leader of the workshop on strategic alliances is also positive: "A good turnout and a nice mixed crowd with lots of interaction". Mischievously, he adds: "Not the usual pack of consultants."



## The right crowd

Interaction was further stimulated through the parallel organised expert meetings in which starters could tap into the expertise of for example investors and experienced entrepreneurs. A good idea, according to Joris Heus (TTO, AMC Amsterdam). "This way, you create easy access to venture capitalists and it is very efficient to be able to talk to several parties in one afternoon." The venture capitalists agreed. "The informal and easy going character of this event creates an overall positive vibe", said John de Koning of Life Sciences Partners (LSP). And the meetings were worthwhile, according

to Tim Knotnerus of Aescap Venture: "We had some interesting conversations with young entrepreneurs." The combination of interesting workshops and expert meetings attracts the right crowd, said Menno de Jong of Nano-FM, one of the contestants of the Venture Challenge spring 2010 round. "I have talked to a number of interesting people. It is a nice way to meet other starting entrepreneurs." Alfred Nijkerk of VenGen shared that opinion: "It is a very good idea to bring these starting entrepreneurs together in this way. A unique event in that respect."

## Interested in staying up-to-date with the LifeSciences@work activities?

Subscribe to our mailing list: [www.lifesciencesatwork.nl/contact](http://www.lifesciencesatwork.nl/contact)

**Find out how we can help you!**  
[www.lifesciencesatwork.nl](http://www.lifesciencesatwork.nl)